

Charting the Course for the American Fisheries Society

AFS 5-Year Strategic Plan,
2020–2024



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Welcome

Welcome to the 2020–2024 Strategic Plan for the American Fisheries Society. For 150 years, the American Fisheries Society has served fisheries professionals, advanced fisheries science, and promoted wise use and stewardship of fisheries and other aquatic resources. One-and-a-half centuries of international leadership in fisheries science, policy, and management does not simply happen: it is the result of carefully crafted plans of action carried out by the Society’s membership. Like previous strategic plans, this document is intended to guide the Society, its Units, leaders, and staff in fulfilling our mission to improve the conservation and sustainability of fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems by advancing fisheries and aquatic science and promoting the development of fisheries professionals. This document is also intended to help us gauge our collective progress in the coming years. Quantitative analysis is ingrained in all fisheries professionals, but we have not always measured our accomplishments and effectiveness as an organization with the same rigor we apply to other aspects of our professional lives. The 2020–2024 Strategic Plan was written to inspire our members, facilitate benchmarking, and foster meaningful introspection regarding the Society’s productivity in the coming years. The 2020–2024 Strategic Plan speaks to internal and external audiences and articulates who we are and what we do. It is meant to help us reach out beyond our membership and discipline to other organizations, decision makers, and the public. The challenges facing aquatic resources are complex, and we must work across traditional boundaries to identify and implement solutions. We look forward to achieving the goals set forth in this strategic plan and fulfilling our shared mission for the next 5 years and the next 150 years to come.



Mission and Vision

American Fisheries Society (AFS) and Unit Missions

To improve the conservation and sustainability of fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems by advancing fisheries knowledge and promoting the development of fisheries professionals.

Chapters: Coordinate information exchange, outreach, and aquatic stewardship within their geographic region. Priorities include member support and coordinating with local, provincial, state, and tribal governments, and nongovernment organizations.

Divisions: Complement Chapter activities related to information exchange, outreach, aquatic stewardship, member support, and governance at a regional level. Divisions also maintain liaison roles with regional resource stakeholders and represent Chapter needs to AFS leadership.

Sections: Coordinate member activities with similar disciplinary and topical interests by stimulating information exchange and outreach related to those interests. Sections also share expertise with AFS leadership, members, and other users.

AFS Office: Assist AFS Units as requested while providing essential administrative services such as member support, annual meeting planning, journal and book publication, continuing education, communications, and policy development.

AFS Vision

1. To be a global fisheries leader and provide appropriate leadership by
 - Supporting fisheries conservation with sound science-based research and aquaculture practices, effective resource management, and networking opportunities.
 - Increasing science-based fisheries conservation through interactions with AFS members, fisheries professionals who are not members, government policymakers, nongovernmental leaders, tribal groups, other professional societies, private industry, the general public, and others.
 - Promoting fisheries conservation through annual meetings, scientific publications, science communication, workshops, professional standards and public outreach.
 - Building partnerships with other natural resource professionals and scientific organizations to achieve common goals (and a stronger voice for conservation policies).
2. To provide education and continuing education opportunities by
 - Encouraging colleges and universities to maintain academic programs in fisheries sciences, resource management, and related disciplines to assure recruitment of fisheries professionals that meet the needs of employers.
 - Ensuring that the fisheries professional certification program reflects the integration of many disciplines relevant to fisheries while ensuring its recognition as a mark of scientific excellence and expertise.
 - Providing a variety of continuing education opportunities using innovative methods to reach the widest possible audience of fisheries professionals.
3. Provide value to members by
 - Determining and responding to the needs and opinions of AFS members.

Mission and Vision

- Enhancing participation of students and professionals at all levels of AFS to assure recruitment, retention, and leadership development into the future.
- Promoting inclusion and diversity within AFS and the fisheries profession.
- Developing innovative and cost-effective methods to make fisheries science and management information readily available to AFS members and all levels of government entities worldwide.
- Support an integrated network of AFS Units that collaborate to fulfill the mission of AFS.
- Developing professional standards including methods and nomenclature.
- Practicing good governance and organizational management.



Overview

AFS, established in 1870, is the world's oldest and one of the largest professional fisheries organizations representing approximately 8,000 members worldwide.

The actions of AFS during the next 5 years will be guided by the Strategic Plan for 2020–2024. Our mission and vision will be achieved if each of the objectives and strategies listed below are met. We acknowledge that AFS is a sum of its parts and that Units serve specific functions in this effort and, as such, are not expected to address every strategy.

The 2020–2024 Strategic Plan refines previous plans by reorganizing the objectives and strategies, making the plan more usable as both a planning document and as a framework for reporting accomplishments. The Strategic Plan also serves as a stand-alone document appropriate for dissemination to our stakeholders. This Strategic Plan lists “Example Reportable Information” under each strategy that will help Unit officers develop their plan of work and determine how they address various strategies. The companion Governing Board Reporting Tool (GBRT) tracks how Units address specific strategies. As such, it is recommended that Unit officers look at not only the strategies in this document, but also at the GBRT for ideas on how to develop specific actions or work plans.

This Strategic Plan recognizes that the fisheries profession, like other scientific and technical disciplines, faces an ever-changing suite of new challenges, including climate change, weakening of the Clean Water Act, insufficient funding, pressures from increased globalization and urbanization, and an aging workforce.

- Increasing globalization, landscape-scale management of fisheries, and research projects that extend across borders will increase the need for standard methods to share data and information.

To meet member needs and thrive, AFS operations and business model must adapt to changes in technology and communications. Changes include the following:

- Communication and Networking – Electronic communication, virtual meetings, and social networking are important means of interacting, particularly among young professionals, international colleagues, and dispersed organizations. Incorporating these tools in traditionally structured meetings and development within established online venues will enhance participation and provide valuable experiences.
- Publications – The proliferation and increased use of open-access publications by professionals will continue to present a competitive challenge to traditional print journals and books and move us away from a subscription-based approach to an author-pay approach.
- Information – AFS's position as an authoritative and timely source of information on fisheries and aquatic sciences and resource management will require increased visibility and engagement at regional, national, and international levels with educational institutions, other professional societies, government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, tribal groups, private industry, decision makers, and the public.
- Governance – As an intelligent, adaptive, knowledge-based organization, the AFS's business and governance models will shift to respond to greater demand for member services; changes in the Society's revenue streams and expenses; and more direct participatory decision making. Leader interconnectivity extends from the AFS office through our membership and is reinforced by our governance structure.

Overview

- Relevancy – AFS will be proactive to increase the disciplinary, gender, and cultural diversity and engagement of its members as a vital means to maintain relevancy and respond to the challenges facing fisheries science and management. This effort must include a focus on engaging young students in fisheries ideas, course materials, and experiences.

The 2020–2024 Strategic Plan identifies four objectives that address conservation and sustainability of fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems through the advancement of fisheries knowledge and development of fisheries professionals. Effective implementation of this Strategic Plan will require incorporating the plan into all aspects of AFS operations.



Objectives and Strategies

Objective 1. Advance fisheries disciplines, conservation, and management

Strategy 1.1. Organize and sponsor annual meetings, symposia, or other opportunities to present new findings and perspectives; create venues to provide opportunities for exchange, communication, and mentoring across fisheries fields.

(Example reportable information: (1) number of Unit meetings, workshops, conferences, and symposia organized; (2) registration fees and meeting attendance; (3) revenue generated; (4) support for members to attend; and (5) number of structured opportunities for exchange, communication, or mentoring.)

Strategy 1.2. Hold events to encourage stewardship of fisheries resources; engage with various fisheries disciplines and educators to increase impact.

(Example reportable information: (1) host events like fishing derbies, habitat restoration projects, river clean-up, community outreach gatherings, and public information events such as impacts of climate change or pollution on aquatic resources; (2) support outreach programs like “Fish in the Classroom” and “Stream of Dreams.”)

Strategy 1.3. Participate in development of AFS-wide standard methods.

(Example reportable information: (1) number of participants developing and providing information for AFS standard methods such as fish sampling methods, names of fishes, rotenone applications, monetary values of fish and mussels, etc; (2) workshops and information sessions demonstrating standards.)

Objective 2. Develop fisheries professionals

Strategy 2.1. Encourage fisheries professionals to participate and present research and management at professional meetings.

(Example reportable information: (1) number of unit meetings, workshops, conferences, and symposia organized; (2) registration fees and meeting attendance; (3) revenue generated; (4) support for members to attend; and (5) number of structured opportunities for exchange, communication, or mentoring.)

Strategy 2.2. Encourage fisheries directors and supervisors to allow and encourage their staff to participate and present information at professional meetings

(Example reportable information: (1) attendees and presenters by organization or agency.)

Strategy 2.3. Provide continuing education by offering training and courses at an affordable price for AFS members; provide training on topics that enable attendees to do their job more effectively and efficiently.

(Example reportable information: (1) course category (e.g., leadership, electrofishing, sonar/telemetry, standard methods, GIS, stats/data, analysis/modeling, fish passage, graduate school/career preparation; and (2) course duration, income generated: (a) course fee (b) number of attendees.)

Objectives and Strategies

Strategy 2.4. Promote a fisheries sciences professional certification program that is recognized as a distinguished mark of excellence and expertise within and outside the Society; if applicable, support broadening the certification criteria to include other disciplines integral to fisheries science such as management, policy, and/or education.

(Example reportable information: (1) how many people applied for certification?, (2) how many applied for recertification?, (3) how many applicants were certified?, (4) how many applicants were recertified?, and (5) how many people renewed?; (6) describe support for broadening criteria.)

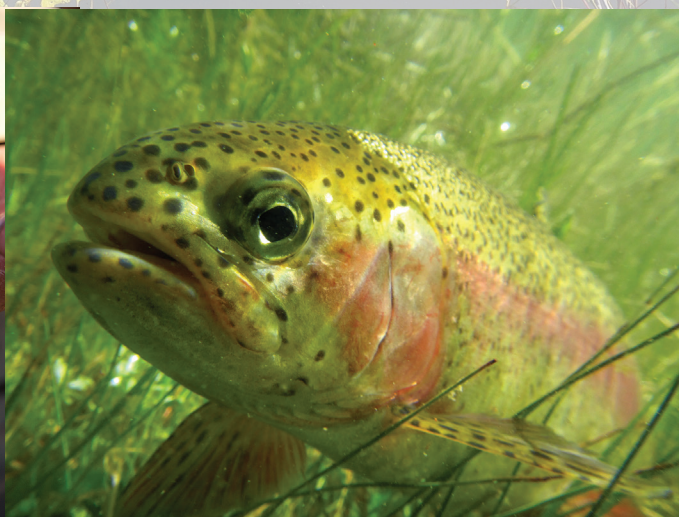
Objective 3. Communicate the importance of the implications of fisheries science for informing effective management and policy and the value of aquatic habitat and fisheries disciplines

Strategy 3.1. Develop products and online resources to promote the value of fisheries sciences, aquatic habitat, and other fisheries disciplines.

(Example reportable information: (1) type of communication [e.g., newsletter, fact sheet, promotional material disseminated via listserv, Facebook, Twitter, etc.]; (2) number of people reached; (3) frequency of dissemination; (4) target audience; (5) dates of most recent update and average number of visitors per month; (6) number of listserv recipients and number of messages distributed; (7) number of “Likes,” “Group Members,” “Shares,” and “People Reached”; and (8) number of tweets, followers, retweets, and impressions.)

Strategy 3.2. Develop relationships, partnerships, and collaborations with other professional societies, conservation organizations, educators, decision makers, and stakeholders to establish and promote the shared goals of fisheries disciplines.

(Example reportable information: (1) relationship developed with whom (decision maker, nongovernmental organization, professional organization?); (2) how does the partnership advance AFS priorities.)



Objectives and Strategies

Strategy 3.3. Publish high quality technical journals, books, and proceedings that present recent advances, reviews, and syntheses of fisheries topics.

(Example reportable information: (1) type of publication (e.g., textbook, proceedings, special issue, or journal), and (2) brief description.)

Strategy 3.4. Develop and disseminate science-based communication materials that represent and reflect AFS's mission to share its collective expertise with political leaders, decision makers, educators, stakeholders, and the public.

(Example reportable information: (1) type of communication (letter, briefing, public hearing, article); (2) description of the material; (3) target audience; and (4) distribution, number submitted, and number attended.)

Objective 4. Increase diversity among fisheries professionals and promote an inclusive environment in AFS

Strategy 4.1. Develop/maintain processes and practices to promote diversity (e.g., gender, ethn-racial, cultural, disability, socioeconomic, and generational, disciplinary) mainstreaming within the Society and the fisheries profession.

(Example reportable information: (1) type of promotion, recognition, and number of recipients; (2) number of Student Subunit members; (3) amount contributed to Hutton Program or Skinner Foundation; (4) diversity within key roles at annual meeting (e.g., plenary speaker[s], symposium organizers, or moderators); and (5) diversity regarding Unit governance (appointed committee chairs, elected positions.)

Strategy 4.2. Enhance participation of students, young professionals, and regular members at all levels of the Society to assure member recruitment, retention, reactivation, and leadership development into the future.

(Example reportable information: (1) type of membership development (e.g., created new Subunit or technical committee, leadership training or mentoring); (2) brief description and, where appropriate, brief description of outcome.)

Objective 5. Provide effective governance of AFS and high-quality service to AFS' members

Strategy 5.1. Practice transparent "good governance" by holding elections and convening regular meetings of elected officers to plan activities that advance the mission of AFS; provide sound financial management of assets, revenue, and expenses and periodically review constitution, by-laws, and procedures manual; and revise governing documents using appropriate procedures as necessary.

(Example reportable information: (1) governance activity (e.g., business meeting, executive committee (Excom) meeting, regularly scheduled excom calls, leadership retreat, election, financial audit, etc.); (2) frequency of meeting or call; (3) number of participants; (4) focus of retreat; (5) number of votes cast; (6) outcome of audit (pass Y or N); and (7) review, update constitution, bylaws, and procedures.)

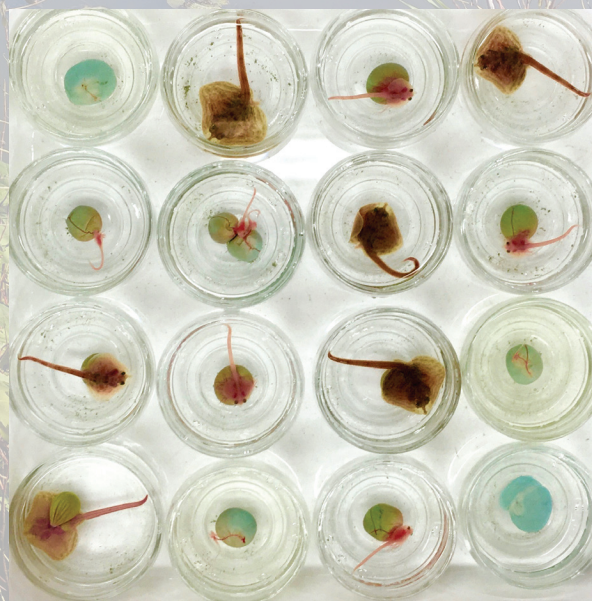
Objectives and Strategies

Strategy 5.2. Recognize achievements and contributions of members, partners, and units through awards.

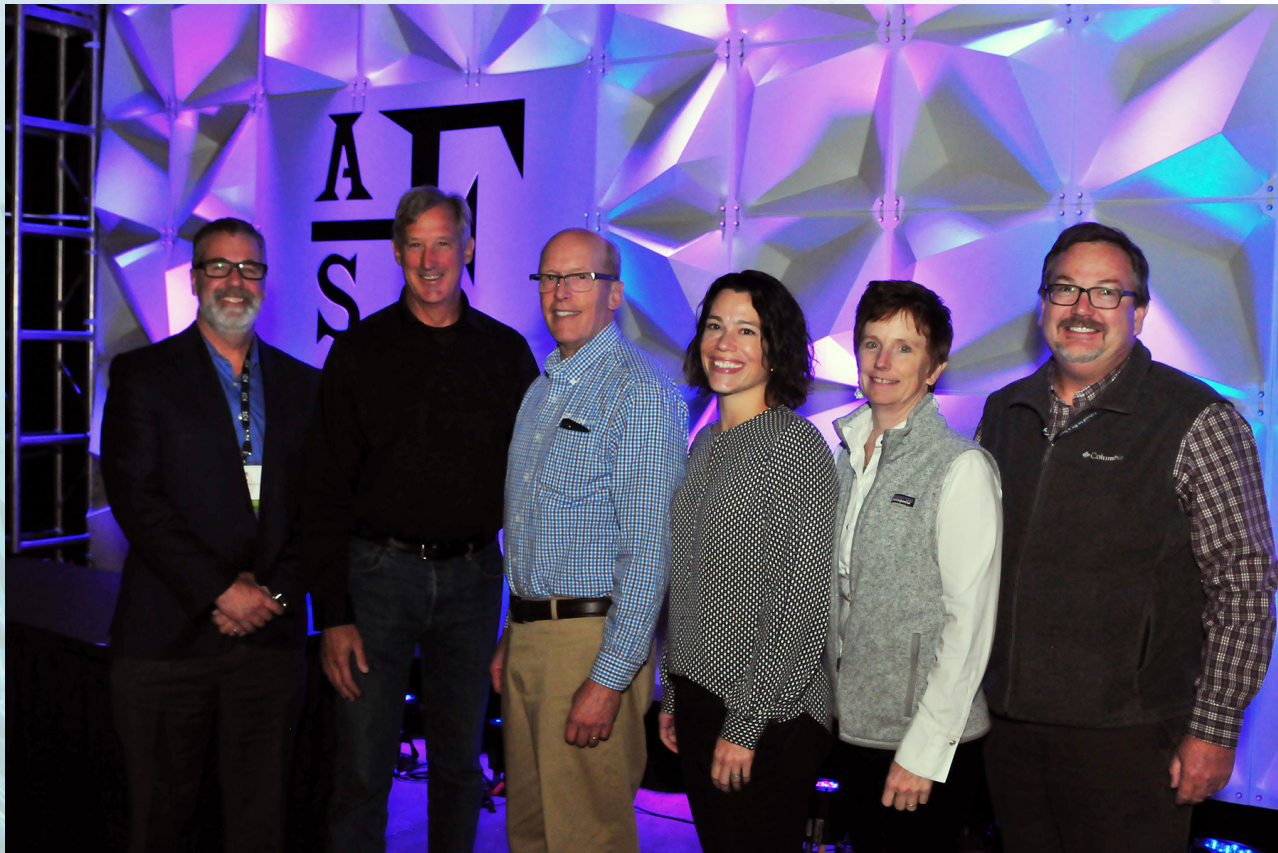
(Example reportable information: (1) number and types of awards, whether awardee was a student or professional and whether a monetary award (amount of money given per award); (2) number of awardees.)

Strategy 5.3. Use current techniques such as surveys, focus groups, social media, and other means to determine and respond to the needs, interests, and opinions of AFS members.

(Example reportable information: (1) technique used, (2) focus of initiative, (3) number of participants/respondents, and (4) outcome or change in Unit activity/specific action taken (e.g., reach a broader audience, refocus efforts, redistribute funding/awards, etc.)



2020–2024 Strategic Plan Revision Committee



Members of the 2020–2024 Strategic Plan Revision Committee. From left to right: Scott Bonar (President-Elect, American Fisheries Society), Jim Bowker (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [retired]; Riverence LLC), Tom Bigford (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [retired]; American Fisheries Society staff [retired]), Jessica Mistak (Michigan Department of Natural Resources), Margaret Murphy (Integrated Aquatic Sciences LLC), and John Jackson (Arkansas Tech University). Not pictured: Julie Defilippi-Simpson (Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission), Ron Essig (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [retired]), and Steve Midway (Louisiana State University).

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